UNITED
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Economic and Social
Council

1. In line with Economic and Social Council decision 1997/306, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) is to review at its fourth session the implementation of, and progress made on, decisions taken at its third session. Further to this decision, the present note has been prepared by the secretariat as a background document for the Commission's consideration of this agenda item. As action concerning most of the decisions at the third session will be discussed under separate items of the agenda, this note focuses on activities relating only to: a) the information and communications technologies (Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/62 A); the science, technology and innovation policy reviews (Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/62 B); and the Gender Advisory Board reviews (Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/62 D).

Information and Communication Technologies for Development

2. Resolution 1997/62 recommended that each developing country and country in transition establish a national strategy for information and communication technologies (ICT), taking in account, inter alia, the CSTD guidelines[1] and also that existing strategies be reviewed in the light of those guidelines. It further recommended that action be taken by national Governments to ensure that an entity, whether already existing or established for this purpose, be charged with the design and implementation of the national ICT strategy.

3. With a view to facilitating the exchange of experience at the international and regional levels, countries were also invited to prepare for the fourth session of the Commission a report on their ICT strategies. This report would include their respective priorities, the mechanisms for updating, and the procedures for implementing the strategy. The UNCTAD secretariat brought these recommendations to the attention of all States members of the United Nations (TDB 473/ICT of 21 March 1997). In addition, the member States of CSTD were requested to notify the secretariat if they intended to report on this subject to the fourth session. The Commission may wish to consider the preparation of a synthesis of national ICT reports submitted or presented by member States at the fourth session in response to this request.

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[1] For the guidelines see E/CN.16/1997/4.

Technology to translate the work

Science, technology and innovation policy reviews (STIP)

7. Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/4 requested the Commission and UNCTAD to liaise in establishing a programme of country reviews on science, technology and innovation policy (STIP) for interested countries[1]. The purpose of the reviews would be to enable participating countries to evaluate the efficiency with which their scientific and technological, as well as industrial, economic, educational and social institutions and mechanisms contributed to the development -- particularly technological development -- of their enterprises. The programme would be aimed at assisting participating countries to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of their innovation processes; to evaluate and strengthen the contribution of science and technology policies and institutions to the development of their productive sectors; and to elicit support from the international community in these efforts through the diffusion of the findings of the reviews. By enriching the pool of knowledge on the policy design and application, the reviews would also help other developing countries and countries in transition to improve their own policies while at the same time opening opportunities for effective international cooperation.

8. The first STIP country review, initiated at the request of the Colombian Government in 1996, has been successfully concluded. A second review was undertaken in Jamaica during the 1997-1998 period and has also been completed. Two more reviews, in Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania, have been initiated and are at different stages of implementation. The requests for similar reviews by several other developing countries and countries in transition, including Romania, Costa Rica, Cuba, Venezuela and Myanmar, are currently being kept on hold pending availability of resources.

9. Following is a brief account of the progress made and of the findings of the four reviews now under way.

10. **Colombia.** The review was completed in 1997 and at the time of the preparation of the present report, the report on the STIP review in Colombia was being prepared for printing (UNCTAD/ITE/IPC/5, Sales No. E.99.II.D.11). A number of recommendations put forward by the review have

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[1] E/CN.16/1998/4 contains the objectives and mechanisms of STIP reviews.

already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. Its impact on the local innovation community has been considerable. Of particular significance have been the recommendations relating to the adoption of new innovative mechanisms for research and development (R&D) financing, including: (a) the restructuring of current financing schemes for existing and additional R&D resources; (b) the transfer and allocation of sufficient resources for R&D and innovation in general; and (c) other public-sector initiatives reflected in the refocusing of public expenditures to take into consideration innovation activities and programmes. The national training agency (SENA) has been restructured to incorporate training for innovation. In addition, national bodies charged with the strengthening of intermediary institutions (e.g., standards and quality control institute, business support agencies) have been briefed and advised on innovation-related science and technology policies and on how such policies can be better integrated into the institutions. The response of both the public and private sectors to this exercise has been very positive and encouraging. At the time of the present report's preparation, a brief report on the current status of the implementation of the review's recommendations was expected.

(i) **Jamaica.** The second STIP review in Jamaica has been successfully completed and was released in March 1999 (UNCTAD/ITE/IPC/6, Sales No. E.99.II.D.5). It has already had a significant impact on the design of Jamaica's national innovation policy. Again, a number of recommendations proposed by the review team have already been adopted, particularly in the information technologies (IT) sector. Eight projects covering the fields of education, technology and entertainment have been designed and are at the implementation stage. These stem directly from the review. Currently, the National Commission on Science and Technology is considering and seeking resources pertaining to the recommendations made in the entertainment sector, particularly music, and in the agro-business sector. The national system of innovation in Jamaica is in the process of being developed and, as proposed by the STIP review, will feature the integration of the country's national institutions.

(ii) The STIP review has also given rise to other activities. As a follow-up to the review, a subregional project entitled "Becoming a global player: opportunities in the music industry for developing countries" has been initiated. Several other Caribbean countries, including Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago, have shown interest in this project. A July 1999 fact-finding mission confirmed the findings of the STIP review. Currently, resources are being sought to ensure the continuity of this work.

(c) **Ethiopia**. At the request of the Government of Ethiopia, the secretariat has conducted an integrated investment policy (IIP) and ITE review in that country. It was initiated in November 1997 with a programming mission during which the secretariat held consultations with Government officials, representatives from the private sector, science and technology institutions and donors. The Ethiopian Investment Authority and the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission were initially entrusted with the preparation of the background report. Subsequent to the completion of that report, an evaluation mission consisting of UNCTAD officials and three international experts was carried out in November 1998. The mission focused on the following five sectors identified by the Government as its priority areas: the small- and medium-sized enterprises sector, investment policy coordination, agriculture and the leather industry. The evaluation report is scheduled for completion in June 1999. The final validation meeting presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the review to the Government is scheduled for the summer of 1999.

(d) **United Republic of Tanzania**. An integrated IIP and ITE review has also been initiated in Tanzania at the request of the Government. A first preparatory meeting took place in November 1998. A second visit was planned for April 1999 to review progress in the preparation of the country's background report and identification of the sector-specific policy areas to be addressed by the evaluation team.

(5) In resolution 1997/41, the Council further decided that, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, the secretariat should organize a workshop on the experiences of ITE reviews in different countries. Given that only two reviews were at an advanced stage of implementation during the 1997-1998 inter-sessional period, a workshop at this time would have been of limited usefulness. However, there are certain activities in UNCTAD which might be of interest to the CSTD in this context. UNCTAD has an extensive programme of policy reviews which, in addition to the ITE reviews carried out in relation with IIPA, includes IIP reviews and developing a programme of investment and innovation (IIP) policy reviews. The Commission on Investment, Technology and Related Financial Flows of UNCTAD has decided to review the work programme on country-specific policy reviews during its fourth session in the fall of 1999. The outcome of this review could be used as an input to the ITE workshop called for in Council resolution 1997/41, should the Commission decide to hold it during the forthcoming inter-sessional period.

Gender Advisory Board

15. The Gender Advisory Board was established by CSTD resolution 2/1 for a period of four years on the basis of extrabudgetary resources. Its function was to facilitate future deliberations of the Commission and the follow-up to its recommendations on the gender implications of science and technology for developing countries. In accordance with the resolution, the Board was to report to the Commission at its third and fourth sessions.

17. A report on the 1997-1998 activities of the Board was presented to the Commission at its third session. Among the planned activities of the Board were the establishment of three interactive Regional Board secretariats, one each for South-East Asia, Latin America and Africa. Initial plans had been outlined for the establishment of a first Regional Secretariat in Jakarta as a joint initiative of the Indonesian Institute for Science and the Gender Unit, Paris, at the UNESCO Regional Office. Preliminary plans for the establishment of a Regional Secretariat for the Arab Mediterranean countries were drawn up in 1998, while work on setting up an African secretariat was being planned in 1999.

18. The Board held two meetings during the 1997-1999 inter-sessional period. At their 1998 meeting, it reaffirmed its objective of providing gender input into the Commission through increased substantive interaction among the Commission's members and Bureau through secretariat. It also set up consultative arrangements with interested United Nations offices, specifically with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), for the purpose of strengthening coordination and maximizing synergies.

19. With regard to the regional secretariats, a Memorandum of Understanding setting out conditions for approval of the proposal and timetable for payments was to be prepared for the Jakarta office. The proposal for the Montevideo office had to be revised to take into account the remarks of the Board and its expressed concern for the proposed secretariat to develop strong relations with other non-research groups including non-governmental organizations, networks and the private sector. A preliminary proposal still needed to be developed for the African secretariat. Also at the meeting, the Board reiterated its support for the formation and development of national committees on gender issues, and accordingly decided to review the budgets of the regional secretariats in order to allocate more seed monies for the support of such committees.

E/CN.16/1997/2.

10. The third Board meeting was held at York University, Toronto, Canada, 24-26 February 1999. The regional secretariat proposals from Jakarta and Pietermaritzburg were reviewed and adopted pending certain variations. A deadline of 1 May 1999 was set for an African secretariat proposal. National committees and support to them were discussed, with attention paid to where money or other resources could make the strongest impact. Several priorities were set for the next months, including locating of contracts for the Jakarta and Pietermaritzburg secretariats, development of the Gender Science and Technology Policy tool-kits, the creation of a website to provide information on gender science and technology policy issues -- www.genderpp.org -- and the creation of a Canadian national committee.

11. In reviewing the activities of the Gender Advisory Board, two issues require the attention of the CSTD. As mentioned earlier, the Board was created in 1997 for a four-years period. Its mandate therefore expires at the end of 1999, and the CSTD will have to consider whether to renew it. In this connection, it should be pointed out that the work programme of the Board remains to be completed and its budget has not been totally expended. Furthermore, the Government of the Netherlands, which has funded the Board's activities, has been requested to extend the duration of the grant to 30 June 2000, so as to allow the Board to complete the transfer of resources to the regional secretariats and to ensure that they are fully functional. The financing of the Board beyond that time will require additional financial resources.

12. Another issue that needs to be addressed by the CSTD at the event of the renewal of the mandate of the Board is the relation envisaged with the Commission. While CSTD representation on the Board was envisaged from the outset, no modalities have been set for cases in which a representative of a CSTD member State has been replaced or a country ceases to be a CSTD member State. When the Board was established in 1997, the Commission recommended eight individuals[1] to serve as Board members in their personal capacities. Two of these were representatives of CSTD member States, one being also a member of the CSTD Bureau. Since then, these two members of the Gender Advisory Board no longer represent their countries on the CSTD. Thus, since 1998, no CSTD member has been serving on the Gender Advisory Board.

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[1] They were: Dr. Swasti Mitter (Netherlands (CSTD)), Dr. Marita Aanga (Romania), Professor Fatchiyah Kasaah (Egypt), the Hon. Alintie Nyakikya (Uganda), Dr. Shirley Malcolm (United States), Dr. Costa Rousseva (Netherlands), Dr. Geoffrey Oldham (United Kingdom) and Dr. Sonia Cortes (Brazil). Dr. Bonnie Keller (Canada) was appointed by the Board as interim Board Coordinator. Her term of appointment will expire with the appointment of the coordinators of the three regional Board secretariats.